



NY – CT Sustainable Communities Consortium Public Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
199 Water Street, 22nd Floor, Lower Manhattan
Friday, April 11th, 2014

ATTENDANCE

Alanna Kabel (City of Bridgeport); Latoya Cowan (City of New Haven); Sarah Goldwyn (City of New York); Satish Sood (Nassau); Chris Jones (RPA); Larry McAuliffe (NYMTC); Meghan Sloan (GBVMPO); Amanda Kennedy (RPA); Chris Rappa (SCRCOG); Andy Freleng (Suffolk County); Brian Dennis (RPA); William Long (City of Mt. Vernon)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Amanda Kennedy greeted all attendees to the thirteenth public meeting of the Consortium Steering Committee and proceeded to the roll call.

ROLL CALL

According to the Consortium MOA, a quorum for any steering committee meeting will be reached when two-thirds of the New York and Connecticut Steering Committee members are in attendance. The Consortium has nine steering committee members from New York and seven from Connecticut. Due political changes, the committee is missing formal designations from the City of Norwalk and Stamford. Therefore, the Steering Committee excluded those cities from the quorum count. Amanda Kennedy of RPA took roll call, and a quorum was reached with six members from New York and four members from Connecticut.

REPORT ON CONNECTICUT PROJECTS IN THE CONSORTIUM WORK PROGRAM

Sustainable East New York

The Sustainable East New York was a broad and long-term strategy for the Cypress Hills and East New York neighborhoods in Brooklyn. The initiative sought to examine the area's potential for redevelopment by leveraging existing regional and local transportation access provided by the Broadway Junction transit hub, a large and above ground bus and rail public transit infrastructure.

Residents of the community showed their interest in the study by attending and interacting with the project team in one of the many different workshops held in the area. The conversations edged toward concerns that residents felt should be addressed by the study. Common issues that came up were poor housing choices, housing affordability, limited retail options, poor fresh food access and street safety.

The Sustainable East New York study divided the two communities into three smaller sub communities, which are all anchored by three, vibrant commercial corridors: Atlantic Avenue, Pitkin Avenue and Fulton Avenue. The corridors are bounded by stable, low-density residential areas that have a lot of vacant property lots and highly underutilized properties.

The study recommended rezoning each three corridors for dense and mixed use development. It also recommended increasing the number of new housing units and changing the zoning between corridor blocks to be more contextual in nature.

The Industrial Business Zone (IBZ), located in the southwest portion of the study area is an asset to the community for jobs. However, the industrial zone is poorly connected to the transit hub at Broadway Junction and rest of the community. Additionally, there exists lots of commercial development opportunity around the transit hub and between the IBZ that largely goes unnoticed by developers and investors. The study recommends promoting better streetscaping that can open up pedestrian traffic flow and invigorate commercial development.

Specifically, the study recommended that commercial and residential areas should be knitted together with other neighborhoods through accessibility improvement strategies. New developments should be attracted at Broadway Junction's core to encourage the area's emergence as a destination that can accommodate commuters and residents as they continue to connect to the city and region by transit.

The Department of City Planning has already taken steps to push some of the recommendations forward. There are short-term plans such improvements to some of the streets and transit pedestrian underpass. In the medium to long-term, the Department of City Planning must create zoning studies in the area to further address the recommendations coming out of the SCI report. The Brownfields Opportunity grant, received by the Cypress Hills Local Development Community, can be used to fund the some of the zoning studies.

Questions and Comments:

- Larry McAuliffe congratulated the Department of City Planning on the work they have done. Larry felt that the Sustainable New York was a good example of deep and engaging community planning.
- Satish Sood recognized that public safety was a major concern in some of the city's preliminary assessments area. He was very happy to see that the study thoroughly fleshed out an approach to address the perception of safety.
- Andy Freleng questioned about the perception to high density in the area.
 - There were only mild concerns from residents close to the industrial and manufacturing area. However, there shouldn't be a challenge in getting local communities' mindset to change.
- Noise pollution is a concern with the transit hub.
 - The Department of City Planning is working with the zoning department to address this issue. Also, there are a lot of design options that can be employed to mitigate noise pollution.
- Chris Jones asked the project team to explain how the SCI grant allowed them to plan differently than they would normally do.
 - The grant allowed the project team to expand public outreach to a very deep and far reaching level.

Bronx Metro-North

The Bronx Metro-North Study looked at eight stations, six existing and two proposed, to determine ways of improving capacity that will accommodate growth and increase ridership 20 to 40 years in the future. All eight stations are located in prime areas in the Bronx that promote connections to other modes of transportation. These stations and their corridors also experience a large share of reverse commuting; hence, they are perfectly positioned to transform the Bronx into a major gateway to jobs in the region.

Land use and visioning exercises were used by the project team to help community residents understand and appreciate the importance of the Bronx transit corridors. The project team held interactive workshops and partnered with local business and educational institutions to help community members visualize what density

can look like around the stations in their neighborhood and how improved walkability can transform their streets.

Almost all eight station areas have similar challenges with zoning, walkability and transit access. Understanding the similarities allowed the project team to determine suitable build-out scenarios that should be permitted around each station in order to determine the priorities and necessary steps to implement those strategies.

The final report identified areas in need of further research once more funding is secured. The Department of City Planning is working closely with ULI to select a few places in the Bronx for more studies.

- A member representing the Bronx Borough President's Office congratulated the Bronx office team of the Department of City Planning for the work they have done. The Borough President's office endorses the recommendations that will lead to greater transportation accessibility in the Bronx. It is seen as a high priority.
- Chris Jones asked what kind of reaction was received by the community concerning job opportunities in the suburbs.
 - People from the community have been taking advantage of job opportunities in the suburbs, but they don't realize that the access is available through rail. The study hopes to change this perception.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public comments.

ACTION ITEMS

The approval of the April 11, 2014 Steering Committee meeting minutes was motioned by Alanna Kabel representing the City of Bridgeport and seconded by Satish Sood of Nassau County. The minutes were adopted unanimously by the Steering Committee.

The adoption of Steering Committee Resolution SC02-2014 – Sustainable Communities East New York was motioned by Sarah Goldwyn representing the City of New York, and seconded by Satish Sood of Nassau County. This resolution was passed unanimously by the Steering Committee.

The adoption of Steering Committee Resolution SC03-2014 – Bronx Metro-North Study was motioned by Sarah Goldwyn representing the City of New York, and seconded by Meghan Sloan of Greater Bridgeport Regional Council. This resolution was passed unanimously by the Steering Committee.

DEVELOPMENT ITEMS

Execution Plan for Regional Sustainable Development- Chris Jones

The Implementation Plan for Sustainable Development in the New York-Connecticut Metropolitan Region is the final deliverable for the NY-CT consortium. The draft was released on April 11, 2014 for public comment review period of 30-days. There was a public review session held at NYMTC on May 30th. Monday, May 12, was the last day to submit comments. The plan was organized in three sections: goals, outcomes, impediments as the first, realizing and diagnostics as the second and the third section is the FHEA. Chris Jones reviewed the recommendations and actions from the plan with the audience. The plan can be found and downloaded at www.sustainable.nyct.org.

Questions & Comments:

- What were the aspects of the presentation we are committed to look further into some of the housing questions concerning opportunity for multifamily and affordable housing?
- This helps City of Bridgeport to tie action items to the issues in their municipalities.

FUTURE OF THE SCI CONSORTIUM

Members from the consortium agreed that it would be terrible to lose the value gained from collaborative efforts over the last three years working as part of the SCI grant program. In order for the consortium to continue working together, the members, current and new, all have to develop concrete objectives worth achieving for the greater region. There is no doubt that many of the current members would benefit from the continuation consortium activity. However, with limited resources, the consortium would need to consider how to coexist in a sustainable way. New Jersey Future, (Northern New Jersey's SCI Consortium) presents an opportunity for collaborative work across the Hudson river, but both consortia must wait to be completely unbounded by their federal contracts.

NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA

The next public meeting will be May 30th at NYMTC.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 11:23 AM